

# MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Joint Select Committee held  
at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Monday, 18th June, 2018 at 2.00 pm**

**PRESENT:** County Councillors: L.Brown, R. Edwards, M.Groucutt, S. Howarth, M.Lane, P.Pavia, M. Powell, J.Pratt, V. Smith, T.Thomas and Mr. M Fowler (Parent Governor Representative)

## **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Claire Marchant | Chief Officer Social Care, Health & Safeguarding |
| Hazel Ilett     | Scrutiny Manager                                 |
| Wendy Barnard   | Democratic Services Officer                      |
| Julie Boothroyd | Head of Adult Services                           |
| Jane Rodgers    | Safeguarding Service Manager                     |
| Ian Bakewell    | Housing & Regeneration Manager                   |

## **ALSO PRESENT:**

County Councillor V. Smith

## **APOLOGIES:**

County Councillors L.Dymock, R. Harris, D. Jones, L.Jones, J.Watkins, S. Woodhouse, Dr. A. Daly and K Plow (Association of School Governors)

### **1. Election of Chair**

County Councillor M. Groucutt was elected as Chair for the meeting.

### **2. Appointment of Vice-Chair**

County Councillor S. Howarth was appointed as Vice Chair for the meeting.

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

County Councillor P. Pavia declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Item 5. Chief Officer's Annual Report as an Employee of Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) Cymru.

### **4. Public Open Forum**

No members of the public were present.

### **5. Chief Officer's Annual Report**

#### **Context:**

To provide the Adults Select and Children and Young People Select Committees to consider and comment upon the Annual Report of the Statutory Director of Social Services.

#### **Key Issues:**

This is the third and final report of the Statutory Director of Social Services with

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Monmouthshire County Council representing personal analysis and reflections of strengths and the challenges and opportunities facing wellbeing, social care and health in Monmouthshire. As it is a final report as Statutory Director in Monmouthshire, this is also an opportunity to reflect on the progression over the three years and advise Council how far we have come, and how much further we have to go to be the very best social services in Wales.

At the heart of the report is a vision for wellbeing achieved through connecting people and communities, person centred practice, and quality services. The standard we set is that every adult and child who comes into contact with social services in Monmouthshire, or who experiences wellbeing approaches from outside of social services, feels listened to and understood, feels that what mattered them (adult, child or carer), was central at all times, even, indeed especially, in the most challenging of circumstances. In reflecting back, and looking forward, the report sets out the key issues that an incoming Director of Social Services, the Council and partners will need to focus on in supporting our most vulnerable citizens to live their own good lives and to overcome barriers to fulfil their potential.

It is a statutory requirement for every local authority in Wales to appoint a Director of Social Services, and for the Director to report to Council annually on performance and outcomes in the previous year, and highlight the direction and actions for the year ahead. The format of the report is required for all such reports in Wales and has been developed to show how we are meeting the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014) and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (SSWBA).

#### **Member Scrutiny:**

The Chair appreciated the quantity of work involved but expressed the disquiet of the Select Committee that the report was presented in an unfinished state which made scrutiny more difficult. Following presentation of the report, Members were invited to ask questions and make comments.

- It was confirmed that the aim is to have no agency staff by August 2018 but added that occasionally staff circumstances forces use of such arrangements as circumstances require.
- It was explained that complaints can be dealt with informally in house at Stage 1 or alternatively can proceed to Stage 2 for independent review. Complainants can miss Stage 1 and proceed straight to Stage 2. The average cost of independent review will be identified and provided after the meeting.
- Referring to Qualitative Measures: Children and Parents, concern was expressed that responses to opinions about standards of care were RAG rated red which compared badly against Welsh averages. It was also queried that there was only one question asked of parents. In response, it was explained that the postal questionnaire is set by Welsh Government and there other ways information is gathered and not included in this analysis e.g. a high number of looked after children (LAC) attend reviews with the Independent Reviewing Officer where very different views have been expressed. Evidence from external assessors supports that services are very child focused and that there is good engagement with care leavers. Given this explanation, it was questioned how other authorities appear to do much better. It was responded that it depends on who is asked and who responds to the survey; it is not always a like for like comparison. Notwithstanding, some thought needs to be given to the outcomes.

It was suggested that Welsh Government should consider using a different method to capture data as there appeared to be no control on questions and how they are asked.. It was explained that a new Welsh Government Working Group has been set up to review the national outcomes framework and its use for children and families. It was

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added that information could be broken down into cohorts to provide a better comparison.

- A question was asked about access to over 18 adult care records and data protection requirements.
- Considering My Mates, it was queried if there could be a similar scheme for lonely, elderly people. The Head of Adult Services provided information about the scheme (now extended to people with mental health problems and possibly to elderly people in the future). The Committee welcomed the news that My Mates is a finalist in the Social Care Accolades (Wales). The scheme has been very successful and is now extended to the greater Gwent region.
- County Councillor P. Pavia declared an interest as an employee of ADSS (Cymru) and asked a question about how the authority is managing the fragility of the social care market e.g. new models of working between public and private sector, and a regional approach. The Chief Officer confirmed that there is a regional working across Gwent, and that there is a Gwent wide marketing position statement. There is also some funding to develop a feasibility study for a regional social care academy. The main challenge remains how to secure a workforce in a county with a demographic of fewer people of working age and an aging population. There is also the pressure of the requirement to register all social and domiciliary care workers by 2020 with Social Care Wales and that they undertake a standard qualification.

The Head of Adult Services explained about “Turning the World Upside Down” and the well established relationships with independent providers leading to the ability to co-produce plans and e.g. maximise runs. A Members’ seminar will be arranged and it is planned to take Members out in their wards to see services in action first hand.

A Member wished to ensure that people who want to take up care work, but are not academically minded, are not put off from applying because of the requirement for a qualification. The opposing view was also expressed that the qualification would add to the status of the role

It was explained that a media campaign has been successful; also word of mouth and networking but emphasised that it is of paramount importance to have competent people through competency frameworks and accurate job descriptions that reflect good standards of care.

- A Member asked if the percentage of assessments of children completed within statutory timescales and identified as “Red” referred to e.g. autism, and if so, how improvements will be made. The Head of Children’s Services clarified this was referrals arising from concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child. It was asked if the delay was due to a staffing issue. It was explained that there are sufficient staff and that there is a 42 day timescale. It was stated that no child is left at risk and staff are deployed according to level of risk. It was added that this is an improving position and the target is 92% this year.
- The Chair sought reassurance about the percentage of LAC at Key Stage 4 who achieved the core subject indicator. In 2016/17 the outcome was 29.41% which was above the Welsh average. It was noted that in 2017/18 outcomes were 6.1% but still in the top quartile. It was questioned if these pupils had been tracked and if this was an expected outcome. It was explained that all but one child in the cohort of 15 has additional learning needs, the majority educated at additional learning needs settings or

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at the Pupil Referral Unit. More work will be undertaken to satisfy ourselves that they achieved against their own potential, not necessarily against national standards.

- Regarding young people with mental health problems, reassurance was sought of joint working between the authority and health services. The Chief Officer responded that she chairs the Gwent Children and Young People Partnership, the focus of which is mental health and wellbeing and emotional resilience. There is also a Monmouthshire Partnership that considers the skills to work effectively with young people. Early intervention in the county and the integration of primary mental health services has been successful.  
There are regular meetings with health colleagues regarding specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) referrals.
- The Chair questioned the role of elected members as corporate parents and for safeguarding. It was reported that all have received safeguarding training. Further corporate parent training is required and is an action point from the meeting.
- A Member questioned, and it was responded that, Edge of Care service is being developed through core funding plus money from Welsh Government to develop family intervention services, fund support workers in teams and for rehabilitation and prevention.
- It was explained that the Institute of Public Care evaluation was commissioned as part of the improvement programme.
- Regarding the integrated wellbeing network, the specialist end of wellbeing workforce linked with GP practices was confirmed as an identified gap.
- A Member was informed that but there is respite care available in Herbert Rd, Caldicot and also some foster carers supply respite care.
- Equipment and adaptations are held by Mediquip at regional level and also in local stores. Equipment is issued following assessment.
- The Chief Officer answered a Member's question that the biggest matter for her successor would be systems.

#### **Committee Conclusions:**

The Chair summed up on behalf of the Joint Select Committee that:

- In future, reports are expected to be in a more finished format;
- Further training should be made available to ensure elected members are aware and informed of the corporate parenting role; and
- Welsh Government should be contacted regarding the need for better research methods to provided clearer qualitative data for evaluative purposes.

The Officers were thanked for their contribution to the meeting and the Chief Officer was wished well for her future new role with Cardiff City Council.

## **6. Safeguarding Report**

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### Context:

This purpose of this report is:

- To evaluate the progress of Monmouthshire County Council's key safeguarding priorities during 2017/18, using identified measures to highlight progress, identify risks and set out clear improvement actions and priorities for further development.
- To inform Members about the effectiveness of safeguarding in Monmouthshire and the work that is in progress to support the Council's aims in protecting children and adults at risk from harm and abuse.
- To inform Members about the progress made towards meeting the standards in the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy approved by Council in July 2017.

### Key Issues:

1. This safeguarding evaluation is based on activity and information from October 2017 – March 2018, and where relevant considers the whole year perspective. It builds upon the previous progress review reported in relation to the period March 2017 – October 2017. The timing of this report reflects a biannual reporting cycle to Select Committees and Council.

2. The report is developed within the context of the approved Monmouthshire County Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy which covers duties for both children and adults at risk in line with the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act (2014). The analysis within the report reflects progress against priority areas set out within the policy and draws on data and information concerning both groups.

3. Embedding and sustaining the highest standards of safeguarding is a continuous endeavour. This Evaluative Report forms an integral part of the improvement of safeguarding practice across the Council. It asks critical questions about what are we trying to achieve, how well we are doing, what is the evidence to support our analysis, do we understand, manage and mitigate risks and how can we improve and develop. This is fundamental to an open and transparent approach to the evaluative task. The report tries, wherever possible, to balance qualitative and quantitative data as well as drawing in other sources of information to support triangulation of the assertions around progress.

4. The provisional self-assessment score has been developed by the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group (WASG) on the basis of evidence reviewed to date and critical challenge. It uses the corporate scoring framework to provide an overall judgement of effectiveness.

5. The key risks arising from the Evaluative Report have been extracted and incorporated into the Safeguarding Risk Register (Appendix 2). The most significant risks also feature in the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

6. Priority improvement actions arising from the Evaluative Report form the basis of the Safeguarding Action Plan which is implanted and monitored through the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group.

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#### **Recommendations:**

Members are requested to:

- Jointly scrutinise the Safeguarding Evaluation Report in its current draft format.
- Make recommendations in respect of its further development in preparation for presentation at full council.
- Note the key safeguarding risks and approve the priority improvement actions identified to date.

#### **Member Scrutiny:**

The report was introduced by the Head of Children's Services and the following observations were made and questions asked:

- Surprise was expressed by a Member that the report of the outcome of the inspection carried out by Wales Audit Office, Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales was not yet available. It was agreed that a letter should be written to Wales Audit Office to chase progress.
- Regarding Kerbcraft, it was responded that there will be annual reports to Children and Young People Select Committee in future.
- A Member referred to the strong criticism that the authority did not have effective and appropriate management systems and asked if the right investment has now been made. It was explained that there have been significant developments in reporting mechanisms since the opinion was given, the Whole Authority Safeguarding Group is well established, the policy has been revised and the depth and scope of safeguarding is well understood across the council. In response to a query, it was stated that there was a part time post to fill to cover the corporate aspect rather than the operational role.
- The Chair drew attention to a "red" judgement on testing the statutory duty to report across the workforce querying if there was a training need. It was explained that this is a relatively new duty and it will be necessary to see if there is an impact on adult safeguarding referrals. It will be monitored.
- It was commented that there were empty boxes in Appendix 3 of the self-assessment marks and no evidence or further actions yet the marks have been moved up. It was explained that the data supports priority actions going forward and is indicative of the work in progress position in developing the overall report. It was accepted that further work is needed. Actions will be tracked through the whole authority safeguarding group with a preferred deadline for completion by the next council whilst acknowledging the unavailability of the inspection report.

In response to a question, it was explained that safeguarding has been a feature of internal audit work for at least the last three years. The question marks referred to the aspect that will be the focus according to risks identified in self-evaluation and the inspection report. In advising Council of the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, it has been necessary to make a judgement call in the absence of the inspection report.

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#### **Committee Conclusions:**

It was concluded that it would have been preferred if the draft report was more complete as it was difficult to scrutinise in the format presented.

It was noted that the Council had moved a long way from being in special measures and the recommendations were noted

The Joint Select Committee was in agreement that a letter should be sent to seek progress in the publication of the Wales Audit Office/Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales report.

#### **7. Disabled Facilities Grant**

##### **Purpose:**

To provide an update on the provision of disabled facilities grants (DFGs) and Safety at Home (SaH) grants and the outcomes achieved for both service users Social Care. The report also seeks to assure members that service is aligned with the Council's safeguarding policy.

##### **Key Issues:**

1. The Council has a statutory duty to provide DFG's within six months of receiving an application. Failure to do so lays it open to legal challenge. It also has discretion to provide SaHs. All DFGs are capped at £36,000 and while the average adult award is about £6,000 each year a number of larger, complex grants are provided to meet the needs of both adults and children with complex disabilities. Children's DFG's aren't capped and, therefore, can utilise a disproportionate amount of the budget.

2. SaHs are intended for smaller works such as handrails, half steps and minor alterations, often costing less than £250 but which make a dwelling safer for a disabled resident. SaH's often facilitate hospital discharge or reduce the risk of falls and injuries, which might necessitate hospitalisation and are administered on behalf of the Council by Care & Repair alongside Rapid Response Adaptations.

3. In recent years, an annual shortage of funding for adaptations has impacted upon the time some clients have needed to wait for DFG's. On occasions it has been necessary to prioritise SaH. The increased funding for 2017/18 significantly improved the situation.

4. The average time to complete a DFG was reduced from 386 days in 2016/17 to 193 days in 2017/18. In addition, the Council has delivered more adaptations and, therefore, assisted more applicants. Not only has this improved the quality of life for more applicants, carers and their families, it will have provided business benefits to Social Care. The success is also applicable to the SaH minor adaptation programme and it wasn't necessary to prioritise work towards the end of the financial year. The success was achieved through:

The additional £300,000 capital funding for DFG's (but also SaH); reviewing contractor quotation arrangements; re-introducing 'lean' processing (which streamlines means-testing) and managing the budget based on actual expenditure rather than committed expenditure.

5. A more detailed overview of performance is detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

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6. Alternatives to DFGs and SAHs do exist, including annual ENABLE funding from Welsh Government, which offers a fully flexible option with simplified approvals (e.g. no means testing or necessity for an Occupational Therapist to assess). Welsh Government encourages use through a partnership approach. The Council, however, strictly can't replace DFG funding with ENABLE funding. Other options to fund adaptations are available but are significantly less utilised. Nevertheless some potential applicants do opt to proceed with the necessary works at their own cost.

#### **Recommendations:**

The Committee consider how the disabled adaptation programme is supporting residents to remain living safely and independently at home, reflect on performance and make recommendations as appropriate.

#### **Member Scrutiny:**

The Housing & Communities Manager presented the report and questions and comments were made as follows:

- The Chair noted that adaptations have made a very positive impact on the quality of people's lives and thanked the team accordingly.
- Members led tributes to campaigner for people with disabilities, Jenny Barnes, who had passed away recently, acknowledging the significant contribution and impact she had made.
- A Member commented that there is insufficient suitably adapted housing and suggested that all housing (not just affordable) being built should have a downstairs toilet and bathroom or shower facilities, and handrails. It was responded that, whilst this would be an optimal position, the authority has no control to insist on such a requirements. In response to a question, it was noted that there were plans in the future to make such facilities a legal requirement/national policy. It was suggested that the authority may wish to consider this matter further in due course.
- In response to a question, it was explained that if a house is sold within a set period of time and the DGF was over £5000, the value of the grant is requested back.
- A Member asked how often a 'bed blocking' situation will occur, due to a home not being adapted for the individual to return home. It was explained that SaH grants (steps, handrails, small ramps etc.- delivered and administered by Care and Repair who also deliver the Rapid Response programme for the Welsh Government) enable a quick discharge from hospital.
- It was queried what happens about return and reuse of equipment and explained that there is a Social Services equipment store.

#### **Committee Conclusion:**

The Joint Adults and Children and Young People Select Committee scrutinised the report, and noted that the grant was raised last year and fully spent. It was agreed that the increasing aging population will create continuous pressure. It was recognised, therefore, that it is a very valuable grant and a valued function and should be kept under review as demand will be increasing year on year.

The Officer was thanked for his contribution.



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**The meeting ended at 4.01 pm**